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Introduction

Catherine Steel, Christa Gray and Henriette van der Blom

The Roman Republic, alongside fifth-century Athens, has provided one of the most influential classical models of political organisation. In the various receptions of both communities, however, there has been a constant tendency to simplify and idealise: Athens as the model democracy in which art, architecture, literature and philosophical thought flourished, Rome as an efficient and effective force conquering and consolidating a vast area of territory thanks to its superior organisational powers.[1] Yet the Roman Republic was not a single and unchanging entity over the nearly five centuries of its existence.[2] Nor was it always a stable organisation, especially during the last decades before Octavian's establishment of the Principate, when it was subject to near-constant conflict as its citizens competed over the proceeds from its conquests. These conflicts can, at points, be traced in considerable detail, painting a highly complex picture of the political, religious and social forces at work in the Roman state, yet other aspects of the political sphere remain frustratingly opaque, obscured by the nature of the surviving evidence which consistently privileges an elite perspective.

This volume takes as its starting point two distinct frameworks within which political action at Rome took place. One is the institutional context, by which we mean the rules and organisational structures by which political decisions were reached and implemented. At Rome, this included assemblies of citizens, the magistrates who could summon them, their procedural rules and the decisions that they could legitimately reach; the Senate, its members, its rules of debates and the status of its decisions; law, its creation, administration and implementation; religious authority and decision-making; and executive power, including the process of elections and military commands. The second framework is that of political belief.

[1] Much work remains to be done on the modern receptions of the Roman Republic and democratic Athens. Starting points are Demetriou 1999; Lintott 1999b: 233–55; Steel 2015. Cf. also Nippel 1980 for the reception of Greek political thought in sixteenth- to eighteenth-century England.

[2] Flower 2011.

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Application of the term 'ideology' to capture the operation of political beliefs in Republican Rome is far from unproblematic: not only is it a concept that is firmly grounded in the political debates of the twentieth century, but it also implies a more pervasive and organised phenomenon than can be documented for Rome, particularly for non-elite political thought.[3] However, its use here, despite such issues, indicates this volume's commitment to the position that political belief was a force within the Republic.

The institutional history of Rome is well served. The Republic as a predictable system whose operation was governed by law is the model underpinning the foundational works of nineteenth-century historical analysis.[4] Mommsen's Republic remains the starting-point for all discussions of constitutional practice, even when these seek to refine aspects of his model.[5] Important recent studies have clarified our understanding of various magistracies, legal practice and of key constitutional concepts.[6] By contrast, the role of ideology has tended to be neglected, or even denied.[7] In part, this may reflect unease over the word itself. But it also reflects an interpretation of Republican life in which political actors are motivated by factors other than their beliefs about how the world is and should be and in which their activity takes place within frameworks constructed in terms other than those of ideologically driven goals. On this view, the politically engaged elite, those who sought high public office and the fame that came with glittering careers, found that the route to success depended not so much on the articulation of programmes of action attractive to voters but on the deployment of money, personal connections and individual credentials (such as past public service), and the effective public communication thereof, to project an attractive and trustworthy persona to the electorate.[8] In parallel with these means to

[3] Wiseman 2009; Arena 2012: 7–8, 79–81; cf. Gray 2015: 12–14.
[4] Mommsen 1887–8; de Martino 1972–90.
[5] Bleicken 1955; Giovannini 1983; Bonnefond-Coudry 1989; Pina Polo 1989.
[6] Brennan 2000; the papers collected in Beck, Duplá, Jehne and Pina Polo 2011; Pina Polo 2011a; Williamson 2005; Schiavone 1987; Vervaet 2014. On the triumph, see Itgenshorst 2005; Beard 2007; Östenberg 2009.
[7] The prosopographical tradition is represented, for example, by Münzer 1920; Syme 1939; *MRR*; from a different perspective, Morstein-Marx (2004: 229, 240, 276) comments on the 'ideological monotony' of oratory in the Republic, a position, however, from which he has moved (Morstein-Marx 2013, 2014). On the role of ideology in the Republic, see Ferrary 1982; Perelli 1982; see also Straumann 2016; Hodgson 2017.
[8] Thus [Q. Cic.] *Pet.* 21–3, 28, 40, 42, 44, 49, 50–3; though see Alexander 2009; Yakobson 1999; Hölkeskamp 1995 = 2004b, 1997, 2001, 2003; see also Tatum 2013 on electoral oratory; and van der Blom 2016 on oratory as a factor for political success.

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individual success, popular participation in political decision-making was shaped by institutional formats that promoted consensus and the articulation of harmony between a benevolent ruling elite and an obedient and grateful citizen body.[9]

This model of political life identifies a number of crucial and distinctive aspects for the nature of the Roman Republic, above all the constant tension between the possibility of popular power and the dominance of a definable elite. And there were undeniably aspects of Roman political life that minimised the potential for ideology to play a role. Chief among these is the absence of political parties. The term 'party' is sometimes used in discussing the Republic, but what is meant by the term in relation to Rome is a series of alliances between powerful political figures, temporary in duration and informal in structure.[10] A political party with members, a published programme of activity, a strategy for implementation and existence over a period of decades or longer is entirely unknown. And – whether as cause or symptom of the absence of defined party groupings – there appears to have been a single dominant model of community organisation, in which the Roman people were unarguably sovereign, imposing consensus on the articulation of competing political programmes and leaving space for difference only in the motives and trustworthiness of individual politicians.[11] However, removing ideology from analyses of Republican political life is ultimately unsustainable: there is enough evidence to indicate that some politicians – and some of their supporters – shared judgements about the world as it was and as it should be and acted with the aim of achieving or preventing social and political change. To ignore this evidence is ultimately to buy into the elite, or at least the Ciceronian, version of the ideal community.[12]

Underpinning this collection of chapters is the hypothesis that Roman politics operated in the ways that it did because of its institutional framework in combination with the beliefs and aspirations that framed political debate. Moreover, these are not separable constraints. It is not that politicians and voters reached decisions about what to do, driven by how they wanted their community to be, and only then implemented these decisions

[9] Meier 1980; Hölkeskamp 2010; Jehne 2000, 2013a, 2013b.

[10] Münzer 1920; Taylor 1949; Meier 1980: 182–200. The Latin word *factio* has a wide range of meanings, from 'social connections' (*OLD* s.v. *factio* no. 2) via 'group' and 'school' (*OLD* no. 3) to 'political party' (*OLD* no. 4a), but in this last sense it is generally used with negative connotations (implying that Romans did not speak proudly of the *factio* to which they considered themselves to belong), and the meaning slides into the more abstract 'oligarchy' (*TLL* s.v. *factio*: 137.12–22), as well as 'adherence to a faction' and 'partisanship' (*OLD* s.v. *factio* no. 4b); see further Seager 1972a.

[11] Morstein-Marx 2004: 12, 206–7, 279–87.

[12] Wiseman 2009: 5–32.

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within an institutional framework that dictated certain forms of activity and prevented others. Rather, the ideological and institutional are entirely enmeshed. The most striking proof of this phenomenon is the office of tribune of the plebs. Although the actual foundation of this office is impossible to trace securely, the foundation myths which the Romans told about it indicate that its fundamental purpose was to promote the interests of one group of citizens, the plebeians, at the expense of the patrician minority.[13] It is evident even from the heavily biased treatments that Cicero offers that there was a distinctive and identifiable kind of politics which promoted the interests of the plebeians and which was largely carried out by tribunes of the plebs, supported by the institutional features of the position, such as its legislative capacity and the veto: adherence to this kind of politics is what the term *popularis* describes, even if Cicero himself attempted to appropriate the term for rather different ends.[14] Political actors who wished to promote *popularis* interests did not have the benefit of an organisation devoted to that end or any agreed statement of what *popularis* interests might be, but they did have a basic rallying cry on behalf of the Roman people as a whole, as opposed to those of small interest groups, as well as a set of tactics and techniques, a pantheon of heroes, organisational means to promote their aims and perhaps even a group of texts.[15]

The task is not simply to adjudicate the importance of different motivating factors. It is easy enough to evidence instances of all the factors so far noted playing a part in explaining the outcome of events: there are patterns in electoral success which strongly suggest that an incumbent consul could influence voting in favour of his brothers or cousins;[16] there were pacts between men to create electoral blocs and benefit from combined tranches of votes;[17] bribery undoubtedly affected some elections;[18] and legislative programmes which benefitted the whole people were passed despite the

[13] On the tribunate, see Russell 2013, 2015; Badian 1996; Steel 2010; and Tatum 1999.
[14] Cic. *Leg. Agr.* 1.23–5, 2.6 (where Cicero speaks of himself as *popularis consul*); *Sest.* 106–27. See Tracy 2008–9.
[15] On the fundamental *popularis* position, see Meier *RE* Suppl. X, s.v. *populares*; Mackie 1992; Ferrary 1997a = 2017; Hölkeskamp 1997; Robb 2010. *Popularis* techniques centred on tribunicial legislation promoting redistribution of resources (whether land or food) and scrutiny of senatorial decision-making and was often associated with a certain type of public oratory (David 1983; Kondratieff 2003, 2012; Morstein-Marx 2004; van der Blom 2016). On the *popularis* history of Rome, see Wiseman 2009: 5–32; on *collegia*, see e.g. Liu 2013, esp. 352–54.
[16] Hopkins and Burton 1983; Beck 2005; Hinard 1990; Münzer 1920.
[17] For example, Catiline and Antonius Hybrida in 64 BC; the Marcelli brothers for the consulships of 51, 50 and 49 BC; Pompey, Caesar and Crassus in 60–50 BC.
[18] See Lintott 1990.

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ferocious opposition of the Senate.[19] The identification of relevant factors that explain particular events is a vital first step in analysing this political system. But the more challenging question is to analyse the interplay of these factors and to do so not simply in terms of their discrete contribution to episodes but also as ways of operating within Roman political space that affected each other at the level of technique, method and principle. An example is the nature of the political year. Roman politics had a relentless annual cycle.[20] The end of each political year saw a near-total renewal of the executive, in which almost all magistrates demitted office and were replaced by new post-holders who had never held that position before.[21] This annual renewal of the executive arguably promoted shorter rather than longer perspectives. It certainly contributed to a very distinct annual pattern of activity, particularly around tribunician legislation. The practical point that office-holders had very little time to distinguish themselves during their tenure, as a result of the institutional framework of office-holding, thus also had important consequences for politicians' mind-sets.[22]

In following this line of enquiry it is vital to frame the definition of institutions in the Republic in a manner that is both precise and flexible. Political life took place within a framework of rules and conventions that, in the normal course of events, ensured the smooth transaction of business, and most aspects of social and family life were ordered by a wider web of the same type of rules, idealised as the *mos maiorum* (the 'customs of the ancestors').[23] Yet innovation was frequent. In part the unsystematic nature of the constitution opened up disputed spaces with different and potentially conflicting sources of authority to which agents could appeal. So, for example, were the rules surrounding the tribunate, particularly those relating to the sacrosanctity of the tribune's body, dominant, or could they be trumped by the fundamental fact that a tribune's authority derived from his embodiment of the popular will? This was the issue that Tiberius

[19] See Morstein-Marx 2013. [20] Steel 2015.

[21] The exceptions are the censors, who, every five years, held office for eighteen months. *Imperium* holders could have their *imperium* prorogued into a second and potentially subsequent years, but this phenomenon took place only outside Rome (until the anomalous case of Pompeius in the 50s BC, who held *imperium* which he exercised through legates while himself remaining on the outskirts of Rome).

[22] For the tribunate, see Russell 2013, 2015. The implications of this in terms of the administrative structures which supported the Republic remain to be explored, but a starting point would be to think along the lines of Pina Polo 2011a (on the consulship), Brennan 2000 (on the praetorship) and Ryan 1998.

[23] Blösel 2000; Walter 2003; Pina Polo 2004; van der Blom 2010: 12–17.

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Gracchus forced into the open when he oversaw the deposition from office of his colleague Octavius; on that occasion, tribunician sacrosanctity was overborne by popular vote. Yet the assembly in 133 BC which had established that order of priority through its decision to depose Octavius did not settle the question once and for all: tribunes continued to come into conflict with each other and with other magistrates, and there was no consistent pattern to whether their physical inviolability carried the day or not.[24] Behind such conflicts lay the idea of the popular will and its very concrete expression in assemblies and votes. The ultimate sovereignty of the people within the *res publica* meant that what was unprecedented could be made legitimate through a vote and its implementation, yet the gap which could be posited between a particular instance of the popular will at a single assembly and the putative will of the whole citizen body proved fertile territory for struggles over legitimacy.[25] As a result of this institutional framework the possibility of conflict was always present and became itself a possible source of stability within the system. So, for example, the powers of the tribunate of the plebs were quickly restored in the decade after Sulla's dictatorship, with the apparent support of the ruling elite: institutionally determined parameters for the articulation of the popular will were preferable to the alternative. The question to be posed is thus not simply one of conflict versus cooperation, whether over programmes or over political prizes, but whether a particular instance of conflict operated within an accepted framework that offered the possibility of an orderly resolution.

The chapters in this volume had their origins in a conference held in London in April 2014 as part of the European Research Council–funded project, 'The Fragments of Republican Roman Oratory'. Although the conference did not focus exclusively on oratory, the project's focus shaped the framing of the conference's research questions and emphasised the interaction between argument, politician and audience as a topic for exploration. An important starting-point was the nature of the relationship between particular institutions and the kinds of arguments which sup-

[24] Conflicts between tribunes in the 60s BC (which may have been historically informed): in 67, the tribunes P. Servilius Globulus and Trebellius Rufus vetoed the actions of their fellow-tribunes C. Cornelius (Asc. 58C) and Aulus Gabinius (Asc. 72C), respectively, as discussed in Griffin 1973; Pompey has a consul thrown into prison in 60 BC (Dio Cass. 37.50.1–4), and in 59 BC, the consul Bibulus was threatened by a tribune of the plebs with the same fate (Dio Cass. 38.6.6). See Steel 2010.

[25] This gap is what, in essence, underlies Cicero's entire argumentative position following his return from exile: see especially Cic. *Sest.* 106–27, with Kaster 2006: 32–4, 330–59; cf. Morstein-Marx 2004: 120, with further bibliography.

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ported action within a particular institutional framework. This is not simply an unnecessarily complicated way of talking about rhetorical genre – though different audiences clearly did frame the language and expectations of different kinds of speech. Rather, it is a way to put the categories of deliberative oratory, that is, the honourable and the advantageous, into dialogue with the other forms of pressure that directed decisions, whether the obligations of personal reciprocity, friendship and family, the material gains (individual or collective) that could attend certain courses of action or the supernatural demands of the pantheon of Roman deities. Not all of these pressures were governed or dictated by legal regulations, and strict boundaries cannot be demarcated between the rules enshrined in public or private law, the precepts of religion and other social and cultural sets of conventions and expectations. But it was possible for politicians to appeal to fixed points that could be presented as unalterable and indeed to an understanding of the public sphere as stable and predictable, even though in practice that apparent fixity was both the object of debate and the subject of regular and often substantial change.

Part I of this volume sets out the relationship between institutional framework and ideological position by exploring the nature of political communication in its broadest sense. Yakobson begins with the *contio*, the most fluid and multipurpose location for organised political activity in the Republic and one inextricably linked with the tribunate of the plebs and its institutionally disruptive potential. He concentrates on elite engagement with the people at the *contio* and particularly on the occasions when the most powerful and distinguished members of the Senate, men who were not sympathetic to *popularis* views, had to use the *contio* to create a positive and effective relationship with the Roman people. He argues that the *contio* was always a place of danger, threatening the dignity of those who spoke to it, despite its capacity to generate consensus. Roman political life involved relentless competition between politicians: even if, on most occasions, this was resolved into overall harmony across the *res publica*, it was so in ways that constantly left open the possibility of conflict. Tiersch approaches this question from the opposite direction: starting with ideological positions, she subjects the terms *optimates* and *populares* to close analysis as an example of a 'semantic battle'. Her analysis not only demonstrates the techniques used by conservative, elite orators to exclude other views but also shows how the synergy between speech and its location within institutional frameworks proved ultimately unsuccessful in promoting elite interests because it was unable to articulate a persuasive alternative to *popularis* claims. Rosillo-López focuses on how men were recognised as politicians at

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Rome by those who were not themselves politically active. She reveals the ways in which politicians created identities in the absence of an identity framed by a political party and emphasises the complexity of political life at Rome, with over forty new magistrates each year. As a result, cases of misrecognition should not be taken as indices of political apathy among the citizen body: most senior figures do seem to have had a high degree of public visibility, assisted by the dramatic visual appearance of Roman magistrates as they moved through Rome. Thus, they would have been able to inspire hopes and expectations among the general populace, and this had consequences for citizens' behaviour in *contiones* and elections. Finally in this part, Clark explores the intersection between political communication and Rome's understanding of its relationship with the gods. Here Cicero's oratory takes a central place, as the only body of evidence where we can trace the articulation of the gods' place in complete form, though Clark rightly underscores the extent to which fragmentary oratory echoes the Ciceronian picture. The gods are a common resource, entirely at home in the sphere of political communication, and speakers can speak of and for the gods in pursuit of even quite small and apparently local concerns.

In Part II, the focus shifts to the phenomenon of the political alliance. Political alliances cannot exactly be considered as a form of institution: indeed, their transitional and informal nature is a central factor that illustrates the ways in which the union of forces between Antonius, Octavian and Lepidus in 43 BC, authorised by a popular vote that conferred an official position on these men, was a new development. But it is also clear that long before the formation of the Second Triumvirate, Roman politicians were articulating, reflecting on and operating in accordance with certain conventions and expectations surrounding *amicitia*, which were nonetheless consonant with considerable variation in terms of the ideological motives of such groupings. Some alliances had a focus on the personal advantage of their members, particularly in terms of elections and beneficial senatorial decisions; others could involve a focus on achieving particular legislative ends or even the implementation of broad programmes of reform. As Pina Polo demonstrates, we can see this range of practice very clearly at the *contio*, whose format encouraged cooperation (as a *contio* could only be summoned by a magistrate, which meant that non-magistrates could only perform at *contiones* if a friendly – or hostile – magistrate invited them to do so) and could also provide a public stage to demonstrate the existence of cooperation or, as potently, the ending of conflict. The three subsequent chapters in this section offer a series of case

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studies of the alliances contracted by three of the leading figures at the very end of the Republic: Pompeius, Caesar and Cato. Santangelo focuses on the relationship between Pompeius and Theophanes of Mytilene. Santangelo argues that despite Theophanes' intellectual achievements, his significance for Pompeius was as much political as cultural, as a confidential agent who could move easily and discreetly among a wide circle of influential Romans. His prominence depended in part on his distinguished position within Mytilene and is difficult to parallel beyond Balbus, who played a similar role for Caesar. Valachova's study of alliances among Epicureans, by contrast, concentrates on members of the Roman elite, arguing that we can identify a cluster of Epicureans among Caesar's close associates. While there is no evidence that Caesar himself professed Epicureanism, Valachova argues that the philosophical beliefs which these other men shared promoted a view of friendship that suited Caesar's careful use of warm personal friendship, and loyalty, in his political actions, as well as enabling them to support each other effectively. Morrell's study looks at the younger Cato: his use of close personal associates to promote coherent political action is well known and distinctive, but Morrell argues that its operation in the crunch year of 52 BC has been misunderstood. Cato and Pompeius managed to bridge their suspicion of each other in the early part of the year through the crisis set off by the murder of Clodius: a shared commitment to ensuring the peace of the *res publica* overcame previous disagreements. These various alliances involve relationships between social and political equals alongside those between men who were not equals, such as Pompeius and Theophanes. This latter case can be seen as an example of patronage, yet, as Santangelo's contribution shows, we cannot by the end of the Republic draw clear distinctions between friendship and patronage in terms of different spheres of activity in which the relationship could be deployed.

Part III turns towards specific institutions and institutional practices: the auspices, the censorial *lectio senatus*, elections, assemblies and a magistrate's advisory body. A common theme throughout is the contrast between what is often presented as a rule-driven system and considerable flexibility in practice. Driediger-Murphy's study of the ominous events which were said to have accompanied Crassus' departure from Rome in 55 BC explores how the participants – Crassus himself, the obnuntiating tribune Capito and Capito's later prosecutor, Appius Pulcher – invoked tradition while innovating in terms of practice and tactics. Clemente's chapter elucidates the history of the censor's selection of members of the Senate: he shows how this practice, though apparently embedded in the *res*

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publica, was itself a radical change at the time of its introduction in the late fourth century and one whose consequences included the legitimation of the emerging patricio-plebeian nobility. Haimson Lushkov's chapter explores how Cicero packaged the institution of the election at Murena's trial for electoral bribery: she argues that Cicero attempted to simplify and replay the electoral choice by setting up a distinct binary contrast between Murena, the soldier, and his defeated rival, Sulpicius, as an obscurantist lawyer. Frolov offers a detailed exploration of the words *contio* and *coetus*: he emphasises that despite apparent similarity of meaning, their use shows a keen alertness to the institutional difference between a meeting of citizens legitimately summoned by a magistrate and other kinds of gathering. The distinction is not always one of fact – *contiones* can be described as *coetus* – but can also reflect authorial attitude and serves to identify forms of political action whose legitimacy is to be questioned. Finally, Flower looks at the *consilium* as a magistrate's advisory body: in a detailed study of two specific meetings of a *consilium* in 44 and 43 bc, recorded in detail in letters from Cicero to Atticus and to Brutus, she considers the ways in which a *consilium*, despite being private, possessed formal features, including the use of set-piece speeches. She suggests that one frame in which to understand such gatherings is that of the Senate, itself a *consilium*, and that the public experience of senators might – unsurprisingly – have influenced the format in which they considered, albeit in a private and invitation-only context, their public duties.

Part IV returns to the broader set of concerns around political culture and political communication, but here with a focus on the ways in which individual politicians attempted to secure a particular reputation which they could then transmit to posterity in order to become part of Rome's historical record. Jewell explores this phenomenon in the context of families: how did men from prominent political families use and engage with the existing reputations of their relatives, usually, though not invariably, within their *gens*? Using evidence from fragmentary oratory, he argues that family *exempla* were frequently imbued with significant content: what mattered was not merely to recall one family's distinguished history but to identify a distinctive aspect of the public service of one's family in order to suggest that the speaker could replicate that kind of service if offered the support of his listeners. Family history within Roman oratory and, by extension, public life more generally thus involved constant simplification in order to preserve memorable and consistent family traits. The final two chapters look at the reputational struggles of two individuals: the dictator Sulla and one of his followers, Gaius Verres. Eckert explores the novelty of

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Sulla's self-presentation in terms of his *felicitas* but also demonstrates how Sulla's reputation itself became an object of imitation by Caesar and a yardstick for evaluating the behaviour of political leaders well into the Imperial period. Sulla remained an ambiguous figure; Verres, by contrast, emphatically lost the reputational battle, relentlessly pilloried by Cicero at his trial for extortion. But, as Stone observes, Verres could be defended – and was, by Hortensius; we can trace the outlines of Verres' positive reputation even in Cicero's attack, and Verres' downfall reflected immediate political concerns in Rome to a much greater extent that it did any consistent Roman policy concerning provincial government.

The chapters in this volume are unified by two recurrent arguments. The first is that there was a constant tension around Roman political institutions between the format they happened to have at a particular moment and the ever-present possibility of innovation in that format. In this respect, as in others, Roman politics was balanced between complex rules that negotiated gradations of power and status and the potency of public performance and audience consent: action was in theory authorised by its having happened previously in a particular way but in practice by the willingness of participants to accept that things *could* happen that way, whether they had or not done so in the past. No-one had claimed to be essentially and permanently *felix* in the way that Sulla did, but once he had made this claim and his audience had accepted it, *felicitas* became an entry in the political lexicon and a quality to which others might aspire. Verres could claim to be an effective governor and military commander: *his* audience, the jury trying him, appeared not to be convinced. And some of the most striking and memorable political occasions happened precisely when those involved resisted the existing conventions governing performance and, through their actions and the subsequent assent of their audience, created new ones. The second argument of this volume concerns complexity: the complexity of institutions and the resulting complexity of public life, with enormous numbers of magistrates and ex-magistrates, competing venues for action and numerous ways to claim authority. If the ideological life of the Roman Republic appears to suffer an almost irresistible pull towards the binary of the people versus the Senate, of *populares* ranged against conservatives, its institutional manifestation points instead towards endless permutations of individuals, actions and methods. This complexity needs always to be considered in attempting to understand the Republic: integral to how politics operated, it makes simple and universal claims about the nature of public life at Rome highly suspect.

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